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Benowie Walking Track

# The Great North Walk



Department of Lands

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## Concept

The Great North Walk will soon become one of the world's great walking tracks. As with trails in North America, Europe and New Zealand, this 250 km walk linking Sydney, the Hunter Valley and Newcastle will give access to a large tract of country offering a range of magnificent natural and man-made attractions. Many bushwalkers will take up the challenge of the full 14 day walk, while others will find their own adventure in a two or three day walk.

The idea of a walking track linking two major urban areas but providing a unique bushland experience, came from Sydney bushwalkers, Leigh Shearer-Heriot and Garry McDougall, who submitted the concept as a project for the Bicentenary. Recognising the potential for providing opportunities for outdoor recreation for the community and tourists, the New South Wales Bicentennial Council endorsed the concept. In 1986 the New South Wales Department of Lands was asked to take responsibility for planning, management and implementation.



J. Eggleston

Situated close to Sydney and Newcastle, and easily accessible from public transport, The Great North Walk will provide a range of recreational and educational opportunities. As well as walks of varying degrees of challenge, there are locations for people to camp, picnic, and enjoy the natural environment. The route includes views ranging from cityscapes to mountain ranges. Numerous features of historical interest occur along the track.

## The Benowie Walking Track

The Benowie Walking Track has been developed in association with the Hornsby Shire Council. It traverses the Berowra Valley Bushland Park from Thornleigh to Berowra and is approximately 25 km in length.

For most of its length the track follows Berowra Creek and has six access points:

- Bellamy Street, Thornleigh.
- Rosemead Road, Hornsby.
- Galston Gorge.
- Glenview Road, Mt. Kuring-gai.
- Crosslands Reserve.
- Berowra Waters.

Alternative access routes are also available through neighbouring localities. In addition the Benowie Track is readily accessible from five suburban railway stations:

- Pennant Hills.
- Thornleigh.
- Hornsby.
- Mt. Kuring-gai.
- Berowra

The track has been designed to cater for all age groups and provides two one day walks from Hornsby to Pennant Hills or Thornleigh and from Berowra to Mt. Kuring-gai. Shorter walks passing through many vantage points are possible and cleared areas have been provided for overnight camping, as the complete journey is regarded as a comfortable two or three days walk.

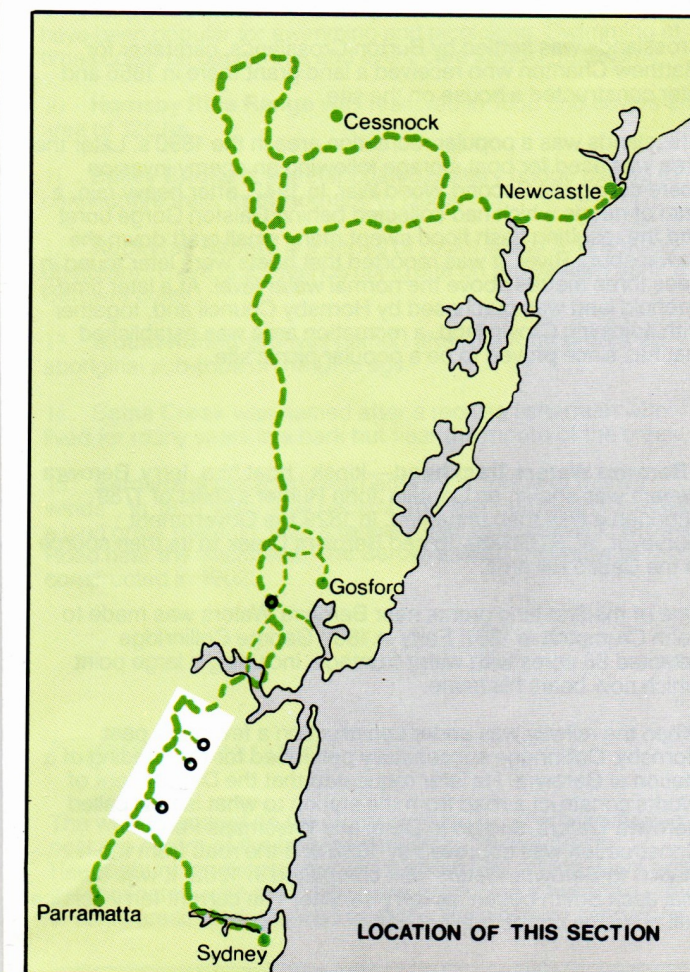
The Benowie Track includes steep sections which could prove difficult for some walkers and journeys should be planned to cater for the capabilities of each walking party. The track also passes through relatively undisturbed bushland and provides an opportunity to experience a series of attractive natural settings; please be careful not to damage or destroy these for others.



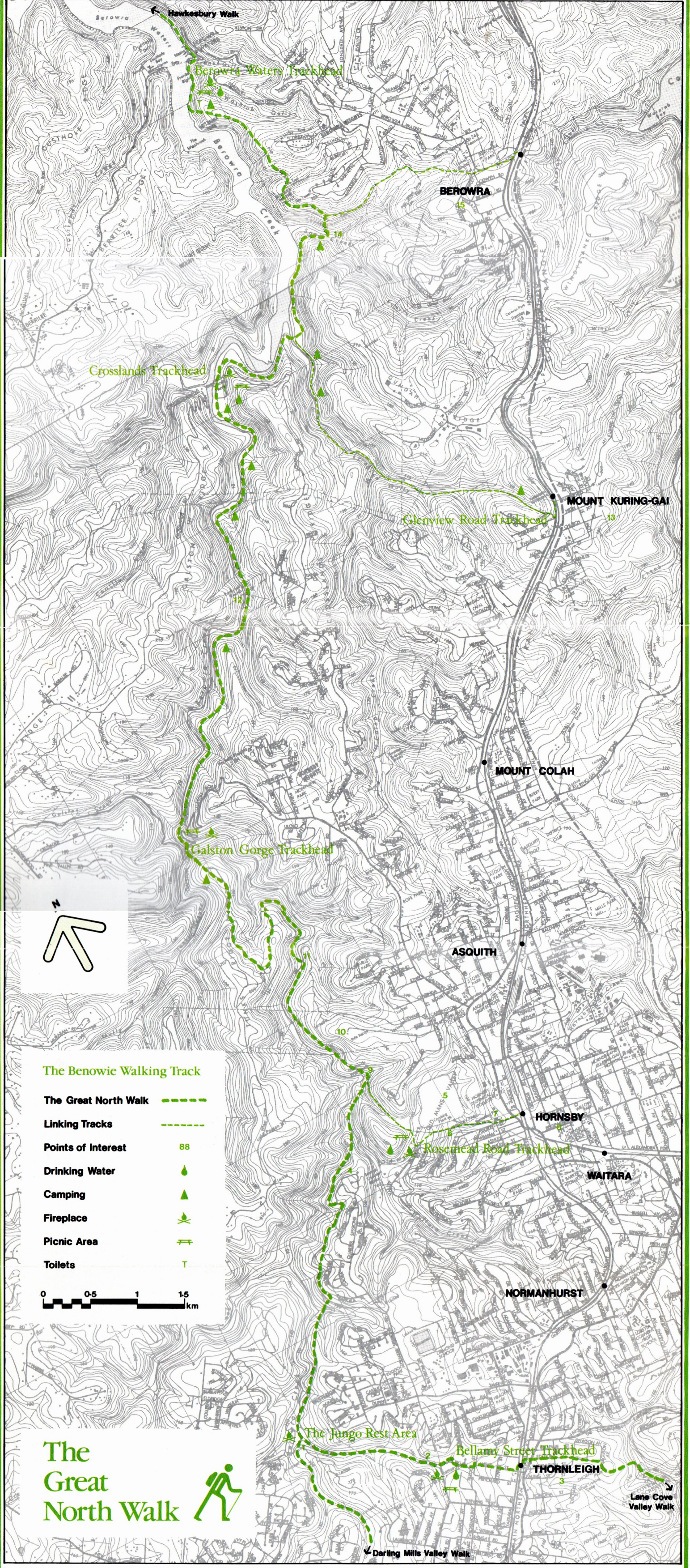
P. Grover

## Walking Times

- Bellamy Street Trackhead to Fishponds — 6.9 km — ½ day — moderate.
- Fishponds to Galston Gorge — 5.8 km — ½ day — moderate.
- Galston Gorge to Crosslands — 6.8 km — ½ day — moderate.
- Crosslands to Berowra — 6.8 km — ½ day — hard.
- Crosslands to Berowra Station — 6.8 km — ½ day — hard.
- Berowra Station to Mt. Kuring-gai Station — 9 km — 1 day — hard.







Hawkesbury Walk

Berowra Waters Trackhead

BEROWRA

Crosslands Trackhead

Glenview Road Trackhead

MOUNT KURING-GAI

MOUNT COLAH

Galston Gorge Trackhead

ASQUITH

HORNSBY

Rosemead Road Trackhead

WAITARA

NORMANHURST

The Jungo Rest Area

Bellamy Street Trackhead

THORNLEIGH

Lane Cove Valley Walk

Darling Mills Valley Walk

### The Benowie Walking Track

The Great North Walk

Linking Tracks

Points of Interest 88

Drinking Water

Camping

Fireplace

Picnic Area

Toilets



# The Great North Walk





• **Bellamy Street Trackhead (Thornleigh)**—parking.

• **Rosemead Road Trackhead (Hornsby)**—parking, playground.

• **Galston Gorge**—limited area for parking.

Galston was named after a town in Scotland. Galston Road, connecting Galston and Hornsby and known for its five "hairpin" curves was built in 1894 and following its reconstruction in the latter part of the 1890's, allowed Galston Gorge to become a popular picnic area.

• **Glenview Road Trackhead (Mt. Kuring-gai)**—limited parking area.

• **Crosslands Reserve**—parking, playground and launching ramp. The area is suitable for swimming, boating, canoeing and fishing. The camping area is available for bookings through Hornsby Shire Council. Campsites on the western side of Berowra Creek are administered by the Scout Association of N.S.W. and the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Crosslands was settled by Burton Crosslands, caretaker for Matthew Charlton who received a land grant there in 1856 and later constructed a house on the site.

Crosslands was a popular recreation area in the 1890's. Later the area was used for boat storage following an enemy invasion scare during the Second World War. In 1942, after heavy rain, a dam of debris which had collected behind Galston Gorge burst and the resulting flash flood swept many small craft down the Hawkesbury River. It was reported that boats were later found in trees three metres above the normal water level. At a later time freehold land was purchased by Hornsby Council and, together with adjoining Crown land, a recreation area was established that has since proved to be a popular picnic site.

• **Berowra Waters Trackhead**—kiosk, boat hire, ferry. Berowra Waters was shown on Captain John Hunter's chart of 1789 although it was then unnamed. In 1829 the Government Surveyor, W. R. Govett, traced Berowra Creek to its then source in the Castle Hill area.

One of the first land grants near Berowra Waters was made to John Crumpton in 1867. Early in 1880 George Collinridge selected 88 acres with water frontage, including a large point which now bears his name.

When the railway was under construction a few miles past Hornsby, Collinridge successfully petitioned for the building of a station at Berowra. He later requested that the Department of Works construct a road from the station to what is now called Berowra Waters, and on to Dural and Wisemans Ferry. Construction was approved by 1888 and the road from the station to Berowra Waters was completed in 1902. It was then that Jack Smith began his ferry service. The current ferry service still operates on the original site.

## Historical Background

Aboriginal relics found in the area include rock carvings and middens, indicating significant pre-european occupation. The track is named after the Benowies, who were a branch of the parent tribe, the Dharugs. Various subgroups of the parent tribe occupied the region. These smaller tribes included: the Wallumedegals located to the south of Pennant Hills, the Euroas and Kuring-gais further to the north, as well as, the Benowies in the Thornleigh area.

Europeans are thought to have first investigated the area in April, 1788, when Governor Phillip's expedition from Manly Cove claimed to have reached as far west as present-day Westleigh. Later expeditions explored Berowra Waters in 1789 and Berowra Creek, to its source, in 1829.

Settlement followed with the granting of land titles and the establishment of a number of major transport routes. The Great Northern Road was constructed in the 1820's. Peats Ferry Road (now the Pacific Highway) was established in the early 1850's and the Strathfield to Hawkesbury railway was constructed between 1883 and 1886.

## Points of Interest

1 **Jungo Rest Area** is a large clearing with barbecues and is used locally for picnics and occasional camping.

2 **Thornleigh Zig-Zag and historic quarry.** The Thornleigh Zig-Zag railway was established in 1884 to haul sandstone ballast for the Strathfield to Hawkesbury railway. Little evidence remains of this but the historic quarry has been transformed into an open amphitheatre by the Elouera Bushland Natural Park Trust.

3 **Thornleigh** was named after Chief Constable Thorn who was granted land in the area for his role in the expulsion of the MacNamara North Rocks Gang in 1830.

4 **Blackfellows Head** is the name given to an area of recent sub-division at North Westleigh. The name was given following the discovery of an aboriginal skull and rock carvings. Carvings can be seen in a special display adjacent to Quarter Sessions Road.





**5 Old Mans Valley** (also called Hornsby Valley) received its name from the "old man" kangaroos found there by early settlers. The valley, which was settled by T. E. Higgins in 1825, is an eroded volcanic extrusion and its northern section now forms the Hornsby Blue Metal Quarries. For safety reasons, walkers are advised not to enter this quarry site.

**6 The old sandstone steps** east of the Rosemead Road Trackhead were built by unemployment relief labour during the depression of the 1930's.

**7 Hornsby Park** was reserved in 1918. Walkers entering from Dural Street through a private right-of-way should respect the rights of the neighbouring owners. Walkers should also be cautious of trucks entering and leaving the nearby quarry.

**8 The Hornsby area** was named after Constable Samuel Horne who received a land grant in 1831 for his part in wiping out the MacNamara Gang. The present site of the Hornsby railway station was originally known as Jack's Island and the Hornsby Junction. To avoid confusion, the railway junction was simply called Hornsby and the adjoining area of "Old Hornsby" renamed Normanhurst.

**9 Fishponds Waterholes** are part of a series of pools that have been popular for swimming and picnicking. Swimming at times could be dangerous and every care should be taken.

**10 Hornsby Rifle Range** was reserved in 1858 and covers an area of 120 ha.

**11 Bailey Bridge** is a prefabricated military bridge placed to connect fire trails from Hornsby to Dural.

**12 Rockyfall Rapids** is a series of rocks which limit boating upstream. There is a small camping site on the eastern bank of Berowra creek.

**13 Mount Kuring-gai** was named after the Kuring-gais, an aboriginal sub-tribe of the Dharugs.

**14 Sams Creek** was named after a recluse fisherman who lived for many years in a bark hut near the mouth of the creek.

**15 Berowra** is the aboriginal name for a "place of many winds". In 1879 Mary Wall became the first European to receive a land grant there. In 1895 a tannery was established in Crowley Road near the trackhead. The Berowra Waters Road was constructed in 1902.

## Natural Features

The walk is located on the Hornsby Plateau, which is situated near the centre of the large sedimentary Sydney Basin. Hawkesbury sandstone laid down about 220 million years ago predominates, with shale interbeds producing a terracing effect in some areas. Soils derived from the Hawkesbury sandstone

cover the area. These are mainly shallow, extremely porous and sandy with low nutrient levels. Rich loams have accumulated in some of the gullies in association with shale and igneous weathering typified by an area near the Rosemead Road Trackhead.

Vegetation is broadly determined by soil type, climate and aspect. Many different vegetation types are found along or near the track, in particular Sydney Blue Gums *Eucalyptus saligna*, Blackbutt *E. pilularis*, Dryheath, She Oaks *Casurina spp.*, Peppermint and Smooth-barked Apple mixed with Coachwood *Ceratopetalum apetalum*, Blackwattle *Callicoma serratifolia* and Pittisporum.





While most native animals within the area, such as marsupial mice, possums and bandicoots are nocturnal and rarely sighted, but birds are frequently seen. The most common include various honeyeaters, fantails and parrots. One may also observe a variety of waterbirds, including the pied cormorant, white faced heron and dusky moorhen. In the valleys, well away from human habitation there are lyrebirds and satin bowerbirds. Other migratory birds, such as the rose robin, spine-tailed swift and dollar bird can be seen during some months of the year.

## Acknowledgements

The Lands Department gratefully acknowledges the assistance of:

- Farley and Lewers (property owners).
- Streber family (property owners).
- Seventh Day Adventist Church (property owners).
- The many volunteers and property owners without whose co-operation and support this project would not have been possible

**Cover Photo** – K. Lindbergh

## Please

- Stay on the track—help protect bushland by not damaging any tree, shrub or plant.
- Observe fire bans—do not smoke near flammable vegetation—use fireplaces.
- Do not carry fire arms or other hunting equipment.
- When passing near homes respect resident's privacy.
- Camp overnight at designated locations (take notice of weather conditions as flooding can occur).
- Take your rubbish home or use the receptacles at trackheads.
- Appreciate native animals . . . from a distance.
- Keep dogs out so as not to disturb wildlife.
- Do not use trail bikes or horses as damage to tracks may result.

## Estimate Your Walking Time

Allow an hour for each three kilometres plus an hour for every 300 metres of climbing. Then allow time for rests and about one hour for lunch. If there are children or older people in the group allow a little more time.

## Before You Leave

Let a reliable person know where you are going and when you expect to return.

## Mailing List

If you wish to be placed on a mailing list to receive information about the track as it is released, please forward your name and address to:

The Great North Walk,  
Department of Lands,  
P.O. Box 39  
SYDNEY 2001.

## Further Information

Department of Lands,  
23-33 Bridge Street,  
SYDNEY 2000.  
(02) 228 6111.

Metropolitan Lands Office,  
Level 4, 22 Main Street,  
BLACKTOWN 2148.  
(02) 671 8611.

Maitland Lands Office,  
Cnr. Newcastle Rd & Bank St,  
EAST MAITLAND 2323.  
(049) 302 777.



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